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THE LUNCH-ROOM IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

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Half a century ago Charles Dickens, through one of his inimitable caricatures, called attention to the importance of proper diet for boys at boarding-schools. Within a few years, an English physician has thus expressed his opinion on the subject:

It is therefore as important that a master or his wife should qualify as a caterer, or should employ a highly skilled matron, as it is that he should qualify himself to teach languages, mathematics, or science. And the results of his failure in the former branch of his profession have far more deleterious effects on the health of the pupil than incompetence in his capacity for teaching has on his educational prospects. For it is beyond all question true that the health and strength of the individual can be made or marred more permanently during the ten years of life at school—i. e., from nine to nineteen years of age—than during any other period of life, except, perhaps, the first year of infancy.

Though there is still room for improvement in many boarding-schools, standards there have advanced rapidly. The dietary schools of the United States Department of Agriculture have been helpful and the general interest in athletics and consequent faith in the training table have had their effect on the food of all schools. More and more the trustees of the schools, colleges, and hospitals are employing trained women to superintend the food supply in such institutions.

But the day pupils in our public schools, even those coming from intelligent and well-to-do families, are not always well fed. It may be as much the duty of the state to supplement at school the insufficient and wrong feeding in the homes as it is to supply the instruction which the parents are unable to give, or to provide textbooks. The education of the appetite may do as much for the future well-being of the citizen and for his efficiency in society as the instruction he receives in the mysteries of the “three R’s.” In her last book, Mrs. Ellen H. Richards considers a fourth R, “the fundamental

principle of right living," and says further: "The fourth R—right living—may well be considered among the necessities of education."

These deeper phases of the question, however, need not be brought forward to prove the wisdom of opening a lunch counter in any high school having a single session of five hours. Not to give the opportunity to secure a warm, palatable luncheon at the recess period would be almost a cruelty to animals. Many teachers have realized that suitable food may play as large a part as natural ability in the widely varying scholarship of different pupils. Unsuitable food, or even an excess of nutritive material, may produce quite as bad effects as insufficient food. The recent experiments of Professor Chittenden, of Yale University, seem to indicate that better work can be done on a light diet than upon the heavier one which has been considered essential by many. The boy or girl who sleeps late and then hurries to school with little or no breakfast may be no worse off, in the end, than those who overload their stomachs with meat, coffee, and griddle cake; but neither class can do as good work as those who are properly fed. Some city officials have advocated that a breakfast be served free of charge in the public school. Though some parents might be glad to avail themselves of such financial aid, the majority would object to such interference with the home table, however ready they may be to transfer to the schools the moral, religious, and intellectual training of their children.

Many cities of France maintain school canteens or permit private funds to sustain them. In some country districts a warm luncheon is provided by co-operation, each pupil contributing a handful of vegetables or a few sous; a savory soup or stew is started by the older pupils under the direction of the teacher, and so, while the lessons are in progress the noon meal is cooking. The school children of Geneva are furnished with luncheons by voluntary contributions of food and money from the farmers and manufacturers, while the details are arranged by societies formed for the purpose. The London School Board has had to struggle with this problem, with its thousands of children underfed and unfit for school. The People's Kitchen in Vienna has served meals to children during the winter months for about ten cents each. Tickets are distributed by the teachers, and the pupils who can, pay for them, but no one knows

if his neighbor's ticket is given or purchased. A society collects funds to provide the tickets.

The pioneer city in America with school luncheons as with cooking-schools, has been Boston. Beginnings were made in some schools by janitors, but the disadvantages of this plan in any large school are evident. The janitor has enough work to do, and neither he nor any assistants he may employ are likely to have a knowledge of food values. Under such control the natural tendency is to provide foods on which there is the greatest profit, and to yield too much to the demands of the pupils for indigestible compounds. The Boston School Board assumed control of the luncheons in 1894, and Dr. Caroline Hastings was sponsor for the order by which the management of the lunch-rooms was granted to the New England Kitchen. This enterprise was started in Boston early in 1890, under the control of the Rumford Kitchen, and had an exhibit which attracted much attention at the Columbian Exposition in 1893.

The prime mover in this undertaking throughout its existence has been Mrs. Ellen H. Richards, instructor in sanitary chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has done more than any other woman in this country to call attention to our need of better food, and has also inspired trained women to undertake the scientific and practical preparation of food, as well as to teach others how to do it. Others who have aided this enterprise in various ways are Mrs. Quincy A. Shaw, Mrs. W. V. Kellen, and Mrs. Mary Hinman Abel. The superintendent for several years has been Miss S. E. Wentworth, a graduate of Vassar College.

To cater to the varying tastes of teachers and pupils under the difficult conditions met in the average school basement, and to provide a sufficient quantity of wholesome food at low prices, is not an easy task for any individual or business corporation. This has been done in a more acceptable manner, and on a more scientific and business-like basis, under the direction of these educated women than in any other way that could be devised. Occasional flurries have arisen from changes in the political complexion of the school board, and flimsy charges have been made against the conduct of the lunch-rooms. The best indorsement of the quality of the food supplied and of the management of the lunch-rooms is the steady increase in the sales from year to year.

The past year the New England Kitchen declined to continue the lunches in some of the smaller and distant schools, and now provides only for the ten largest schools of the city. The older schoolhouses had no place where children could eat a luncheon that they might bring from home, much less any place for washing dishes. The permanent equipment of counter, sink, and gas stove is now provided by the school board, while the movable furnishings are owned by the New England Kitchen. The outfit of dish-pans, towels, etc., costs from \$7 to \$10 for a school, while the expense for serving dishes is from \$20 to \$25 for each hundred pupils. Each lunch-room is in charge of an intelligent, responsible woman, who reports daily to the headquarters after the lunch is over, turns in the money received, and accounts for the food which has been delivered to her by express that forenoon. Then she selects from lists at hand the kinds and quantities for the next day. Since this is a desirable occupation for women with homes who wish to earn something outside, there is little difficulty in finding reliable persons to take charge of the lunch-rooms. The head worker is assisted by one or more helpers, according to the amount of after cleaning. In some of the larger schools several pupils help at serving time, in return for which they receive an abundant luncheon. The one in charge of a lunch-room usually receives \$1 for three or four hours' work, while the cleaners earn about half as much as the usual rate for work of that kind.

Aside from the list of articles of food which are furnished from the central kitchen daily, there are specials for different days of the week, and these vary week by week and with the season of the year. For example, here is a list of one week's "specials": Monday—macaroni and tomato, coffee jelly with whipped cream; Tuesday—escalloped corn, succotash, Charlotte russe; Wednesday—beef croquettes, rice croquettes, apple pudding; Thursday—chicken pie, bread-and-butter pudding; Friday—fish balls, escalloped fish, tapioca pudding. The amount of food which goes out from the New England Kitchen to the schools daily is something like this: 80 to 90 quarts of milk; 75 to 80 quarts of soup; 50 to 60 quarts of ice-cream; 1,000 or more sandwiches; 300 to 500 sandwich rolls; 75 cakes that are cut in eight pieces each, and more than as many pieces of simple cake in small shapes; all this besides special dishes for the day.

The margin between the profit and loss is so small that it is necessary to keep on hand a supply of fancy crackers for use if the regular stock should give out. Yet so accurately are the attendants able to estimate the quantities required that little food is returned to the kitchen, and very few are ever sent away hungry. The average portion sells for five cents, and the quantities are gauged accordingly, both because it is a convenient sum for the pupil to bring and because it saves trouble in making change. The teachers and some pupils spend larger amounts, but five and ten cents are the average. Since some of the food must be prepared on the previous day, and some of it cannot be kept over to a third day and be in good condition for serving, there is a serious loss when on account of a sudden blizzard several of the suburban high schools close before noon.

Many children bring a partial luncheon from home and supplement it with a glass of milk or cup of hot cocoa or soup. A *bain-marie* on top of the gas stoves keeps the soups, etc., hot from the time the expressman delivers them until the lunch hour. Cocoa is made at each school, but those in charge soon learn the average amount required so that there is little waste. Coffee is not served. Soups are expensive, generally, and it is impossible often to furnish rich oyster or chicken soup at five cents a cup and pay expenses. For variety these are introduced occasionally. Some gelatine desserts are popular when served with the garnish of whipped cream such as is placed on the cups of cocoa.

The young person is a conservative eater, not over-ready to try new compounds unless a favorable verdict is given by some bolder comrade recognized as a leader in other directions. As Dr. Clement Dukes has said: "If one or two of the elder boys—the swells—refuse a dish, it is tabooed by the whole and remains untasted. Such is the 'society' fashion even among boys."

At one school lunch-room in Boston one of the teachers has frequently expressed his liking for baked beans, and the boys of the school are ready to consume all the beans that may be sent them; while in another boys' school beans have been found to be so unpopular that they are rarely sent there. In some cases a gradual education of individual appetites may be traced, and the attendants report that when a new dish chances to be served two days in succession or at

some near interval, it goes better the second time than the first. The simpler the form in which the food can be served, the better its quality and the less the expense of preparation; for labor is usually to be reckoned as a larger part of the actual cost than the raw food material. High seasoning of any kind is avoided in the Boston school lunches.

Strange to say, much of the comment made by masters, teachers, and parents, not only in Boston, but in other cities, is less intelligent than that of the pupils, and shows the need of popular instruction about foods and their cost and preparation. Many teachers have definite ideas as to wholesome foods, but they are often based upon the conditions of living or the dietetic theories of a generation ago which have been outlived or overturned by recent scientific investigations. The notion is prevalent that meat must be looked to for strength, and there is a consequent undervaluing of milk, vegetables, and grains. The natural appetite of the young person for sweets is usually looked upon as an evil tendency by those who have not learned the value of sugar as a food. Some teachers feel that the lunch-room offers a temptation to spend money and that luncheons should be brought from home, forgetting, apparently, that the food from home also costs money. Few teachers know enough about practical life, the cost and relative merits of different foods, to be competent judges of the quantities that can be served for small sums. They sometimes demand for example, that chicken pies shall be served for five cents each. Because one master did not like buns, he prohibited their appearance upon the lunch counter in his school.

The time of serving lunches in the Boston schools varies according to the program of the individual schools. The usual period is twenty minutes, and it may come anywhere between 11:30 and 12:30. One high school has a system of its own, and allows students to study at home as soon as their recitations are over. This naturally makes the numbers in the lunch-room vary much on the different days of the week. Nevertheless, in a school of seven hundred pupils the lunch-room is a busy place every day. Settees arranged in the light basement, for boys in one section, for girls in another, are quickly filled by the chattering throng which swarms first around the counter and leaves it nearly as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. The two women behind the counter and the two or three pupil assist-

ants have to "move lively" to hand out one by one a hundred cups of cocoa, nearly as much soup, and the piles of sandwiches and coffee rolls. But there is no crowding or confusion on the part of the hungry pupils, and no unnecessary motions made by those who serve, for everything is ready in advance and arranged in the most systematic fashion.

Though never connected with the management of the New England Kitchen, the writer, as a teacher of cookery, has been interested in watching its progress, since it suggests similar lines of work even in small cities and towns for the women who fit themselves for such positions at the schools of domestic science. Many of the school lunch-rooms in other cities have been patterned after those in Boston, and have far outgrown their model. The women's clubs in many cities east and west have become responsible for the financial support of the lunch-room until it should become self-supporting. In other cases, teachers of cookery or chemistry have acted as directors of the lunch-room, and in some places it has been conducted wholly by the teacher and the pupils of the cooking-school. Where normal pupils have a two-year course at training schools like Drexel Institute, they are required to make a study of the lunch-room conditions and take a share in its management. Such an experience is invaluable to any teacher who must afterward supervise the dietary for a school or college boarding-house.

All types of schools are beginning to provide luncheons nowadays, but the day nurseries were among the first to begin. Here the mothers bring their babies to be cared for while they are away to work. The nursery presents a pretty picture when the tots are having their daily luncheon, which is always simple, but palatable and wholesome. Milk is abundant, both milk to drink and milk soups and puddings. A piece of gingerbread or a bun with milk is a very attractive meal for a small person. An English periodical recently recommended teaching the alphabet by means of chocolate squares with a letter on each. Perhaps some future scheme of education will thus combine physical and mental growth.

The Massachusetts Industrial School for Crippled and Deformed Children provides a daily meal at noon for about seventy-five. Bread and butter is served with each meal in the menu which follows, and

the cost of food materials is under ten cents per person; Monday—roast beef, boiled potatoes, macaroni, stewed prunes; Tuesday—boiled fowl, rice, potatoes, cranberry sauce; Wednesday—pea soup, cold corned beef, rice and molasses; Thursday—broiled steak, potatoes, corn, gingerbread; Friday—boiled haddock, potatoes, stewed tomatoes, apricot tapioca. Simmons College, Boston, has no lunch-room in its new building, but has opened one in charge of some of its former students within eight or ten minutes' walk. The cafeteria plan is followed there and the general arrangements are excellent. The school lunch-room in the East High School of Rochester, N. Y., was started about three years ago. Its success warrants the opening of a similar room under the same manager in the new West High School which is not ready for occupancy. The school committee provided an excellent equipment and sustains the undertaking. Now about \$50 monthly is gained over all expenses, and this is turned over to the school funds. There are six hundred little octagonal tables, with twelve hundred chairs to match. Over one thousand pupils are served daily, and some others come in from a neighboring college. The plan differs from that in Boston, since nearly everything is prepared in an adjoining room. Bread, dough-nuts, and some cake are bought. Five women work from 7 A. M. till 5:30 P. M. These receive about \$1 daily, and the head cook \$2. Fowls are cooked one day to serve on biscuits the next, and about seven hundred biscuits are required. There are no foods served on stated days, the same dishes being repeated only once in three weeks. No coffee is allowed to pupils, but is ready for teachers who may wish it. Nothing is served for which a knife is necessary. From thirty to fifty pupils assist in serving, and receive their luncheon in payment. The social side is apparent in this and many other school lunch-rooms, and some masters claim that it aids in simplifying the school discipline. Some of the modern school buildings place the lunch-room in the top story instead of the basement, and this will indirectly emphasize the social phase of this growing branch of modern education.